On April 25th, the government of Ontario lifted restrictions on the existing emergency order to allow community and allotment gardens to operate with direction from the local Medical Officer of Health.

Purpose
This guidance is intended for operators and members of community and allotment gardens (here on referred to as gardens) in the Region of Peel. It is based on what is currently known about COVID-19 and direction from Region of Peel – Public Health under Dr. Lawrence Loh, Medical Officer of Health.

Under the Emergency Order, only gardens with the capacity to follow this guidance are permitted to operate. Please note the guidance is subject to change.

Highlights
- This guidance provides requirements, recommendations and instructions on the safe use of community and allotment gardens in the Region of Peel.
- Guidance is provided for the following areas:
  - Requirements before opening gardens that include signage, hand washing stations, use of equipment/tools, physically distancing, prohibiting events and food services and communicating policies and protocols to personnel and gardeners;
  - Entrance requirements and restrictions;
  - Hand hygiene;
  - Cleaning and disinfection requirements; and
  - Compliance and enforcement.
Before opening gardens

1. **Policies and protocols**

Use this guidance to develop and communicate (to staff, volunteers and members) COVID-19 policies/protocols that are specific to the community garden.

**All operators must:**

- Prohibit events such as festivals, children’s events, potlucks, training, group builds, etc. Specify that time spent in the gardens is for gardening only and not a place for social gatherings.
- Suspend food services.
- Direct occupants to always maintain physical distancing of at least 2 metres (unless gardening with members of the same household). For some gardens, this means limiting the number of people in the garden at one time or creating a schedule.
- Direct the use of non-medical masks or face coverings if physical distancing is not possible. See Public Health Ontario’s detailed instructions on proper mask use for the general public.
- Direct that only service animals wearing their service vest or with identification are permitted on site, and that they must be on a leash, and kept out of direct contact with other patrons.
- Direct that hands are washed before and after interacting with pets.

**All operators should:**

- Remove or tape-off tables and other structures meant for communal seating and gathering.
- Schedule operating times that consider the space between plots and permit staggered attendance and arrival times to maximize the space between gardeners and reduce crowding.
- Advise gardeners to bring their own tools/equipment, gardening gloves, and disinfecting products.
- Clean and disinfect shared tools between uses.
- Reduce risks of touch points if the community needs to access the garden through a gate, building, etc.

**Communication**

**All operators should:**

- Update the list of current registered staff, volunteers and gardeners and track those who have agreed to participate under COVID-19 policies and protocols.
- Use a sign-in and sign-out system to track who is in the garden each day. All personnel and gardeners must be aware and apply all rules and guidelines prior to accessing the garden.
- Advise personnel and gardeners to:
  - Monitor their own health and complete a self-assessment prior to going to the garden each day and stay home if feeling unwell.
  - Bring their own tools and gloves. If this is not possible assign tools to each person.
Signage

All operators should:
- Place clear, visible signage throughout the garden, especially in locations where shared equipment, tools, etc. are located, to remind personnel and gardeners of the requirements that must be followed when using the garden.
- Consider creating direction of flow signage through the garden area.
- Consider the following content for signage:
  - Garden access is for members only.
  - **Stay at home if feeling unwell/Feeling unwell.**
  - Maximum number of persons allowed in the garden at a time.
  - Prohibiting the sharing of food, tools, or personal items.
  - Guidance on **physical distancing requirements**.
  - Guidance on **how to wash your hands and how to use hand sanitizer**.
  - Additional information on where to seek assistance if they have symptoms (**Ontario’s self-assessment tool**), health care provider or Telehealth Ontario 1-866-797-0000).

Hand washing and sanitizer stations

All operators should:
- Provide hand washing and/or hand sanitizer stations throughout the garden. Ensure hand hygiene supplies are well stocked.
- Promote respiratory etiquette, post “cover your cough and sneeze” posters, and avoid touching your nose, mouth, eyes and face.
- Consider using the following posters from Public Health Ontario:
  - **Cover your cough**.
  - **Handwashing**.

2 Entrance restrictions and requirements

All operators should:
- Prohibit access to anyone who is exhibiting symptoms or has had close contact with a confirmed case.
- Prohibit access to non-members and visitors.
- Permit access only to plant, maintain and harvest food, and prohibit any social gatherings.

3 Hand Hygiene

All operators should:
- Direct the performance of hand hygiene before entering and upon leaving the garden and after using shared equipment. This includes washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water is not available.
- Advise that if hands are visibly soiled, handwashing with soap and water is preferred. If not available, hands must be wiped clean before applying alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Prohibit the sharing of gardening gloves.
- Direct that if disposable gloves are worn, proper handwashing is required before and after use, and that disposable gloves should be discarded immediately after use into a sealed garbage bag.
4 Cleaning and disinfection
All operators should:
• Increase frequency of cleaning and disinfection of high touch surfaces using approved disinfectant and cleaners and guidance from Public Health Ontario. Follow the manufacturer’s instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time).
• Provide instructions to personnel and gardeners on how to safely share garden materials, tools, etc., including instructions on cleaning and disinfecting.
• Set up a sanitizing schedule for equipment and tools.
• Advise patrons to sanitize their tools before and after use and place all trash in proper garbage receptacles. After cleaning, perform hand hygiene.
• Instruct individuals who use gardening gloves to launder them after each use.

5 Compliance and Enforcement
• Be aware that non-compliance with these guidelines may result in warnings, revoking access, charges and fines under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act.
• For information on reporting non-compliance, see the Region of Peel’s how to report non-compliance relating to COVID-19.
• If you have any questions, or are not able to follow the requirements listed above, contact Craig Orrell at craig.orrell@peelregion.ca or 905-781-5457 to discuss options to reduce the potential risks to your staff and patrons.

6 Resources
• Region of Peel – Public Health. COVID-19 information and resources.
  • Symptoms of COVID-19
  • Getting tested
  • Using masks and other personal protective equipment
• Public Health Ontario. COVID-19 Public Resources.

The information in this document is current as of May 1, 2020

For more information visit peelregion.ca/coronavirus

@regionofpeel  @peelregion.ca  @regionofpeel